

# *Art Complex Museum*

## **Art Complex Museum Seeks to Expand Its Mission**

*(The following article by Constance Gorfinkle is  
reprinted with permission from the Patriot Ledger:)*

**Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, February 11, 1998**

Twenty-seven years ago, when Carl and Edith Weyerhaeuser opened the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury, "their idea was to share their art collection with the public," says their son, Charles, the museum's

current director.

So eager were the Weyerhaeusers to have their museum accessible to the entire community that the decision was made to charge no admission to any museum activity, including exhibitions, concerts and all other programming. They didn't even want to have a membership created, said Charles.

His parents went so far as to stipulate that invitations not be sent out to exhibitions, so that there would be no perception that some people were more special than others.

"They wanted this to be their gift to the whole community," said Charles.

Such a gift was possible because the Weyerhaeusers established an endowment that was able to cover the museum's roughly \$500,000 annual operating budget.

But over the past quarter century, the museum has grown to the point, Charles believes, that the way things are done has to be improved.

"We want to do a little more than just the basics - like nicer brochures and better catalogues, more programming and better signage," said Charles.

Added Bonnie Jernigan, publicity coordinator for the museum: "The endowment is still there, and is still committed to providing the basics. It maintains the building; it cares for the collection, and pays for the staff. But, as we've evolved into a more seriously significant museum, the kinds of things that our exhibitions require are more expensive," said Jernigan.

For that reason, the Duxbury Art Complex for the first time is running a fundraising campaign. Recently, 4,000 appeals went out to people on the museum's mailing list asking them to contribute to an annual appeal, which will be repeated every year from now on.

Also, with the help of a development consultant, Jernigan has gone after grant money. This first-time effort already has resulted in an Organizational Support Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Weyerhaeuser and Jernigan stress that the money being raised through the public appeal only will go toward improvements covered by the general operating budget, such as programming, presentations and publications.

"We can remember when we only had typewritten labels," said Jernigan. "Now, we have texts that accompany the works that really tell people something. Those enhance the exhibition; they're handsome; they're easy to read. Those kinds of things make the museum-going experience more meaningful. And when you have more attractive display cases and pedestals, it makes a better presentation."

At the same time the museum is looking for new ways to cover expenses, it is embarking on an aggressive effort to raise attendance. Currently, 12,000 people a year visit the museum. Jernigan would like to see that go up by about 25 percent.

However, there are no plans to expand either the plant or the number of exhibitions.

"It's really a question of better exhibitions and fuller exhibitions, than it is to have more of them," said Jernigan, since the museum's calendar already is full.

Fundraising also won't go toward capital improvements, such as those planned for this spring. They include replacing the museum's huge glass windows, which, over time, have deteriorated to the point that the seals in the insulating glass have broken down, causing the windows to fog, and mirror coatings used to screen out the sun have started to peel.

In addition, the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems will be upgraded.

While this work is being done, the main part of the museum will be closed from April 17; Phoenix Hall, the entry gallery, where there is the most glass, will be closed until August.

Though the museum is now turning to the public to help pay its bills, Weyerhaeuser says, "We still want to continue the policies of no membership and free admission."

At the same time, adds Jernigan, "We must alter the perception that we have endless resources."